

fairly and promptly upon the question; and in the spirit of mutual trust and forbearance thereby engendered would be the truest and most lasting Federation of the whole Empire—a Federation which neither colonial representation in the House of Commons nor colonial additions to the peerage in the House of Lords could ever effect.

It may be objected that this would ignore, and consequently would lower the position of, the Governor. Not so: the Governor is not only the representative of Her Majesty in the colony, but is the confidential agent and adviser of the Imperial Government; and the Secretary of State for the Colonies has a right, and ought, to receive his views before making his final decision. It should therefore be the recognized duty of the colonial Government to furnish the Governor with copies of all such instructions given to the Agent-General, so that he may either at the time forward his views thereon to the Secretary of State, or be in a position to answer any questions which the Secretary of State may put to him.

I need not point out that, if the voice of a colony should thus be heard before action be taken on any matter of colonial interest, *a fortiori* the voice of many colonies acting in unison, as in the recent case of New Guinea, should have deep weight with the Imperial Government, and should not be lightly thrown aside or ignored. Had Queensland been the only colony to urge annexation it might have been argued that the somewhat impulsive action of Sir Thomas McIlwraith was stimulated by selfish interests—not personal, but colonial—which might have justified hesitation on the part of the Secretary of State for the Colonies; but the unanimously-expressed voice of all the other colonies in the Australasian group should have convinced him that it was no mere question of land aggrandisement which animated them, nor a reckless course in which the position of England's foreign relations was ignored. On the contrary, it was with a recognition derived from local experience and observation of the strategic importance of the command of Torres Straits, and with the knowledge that these waters were navigated by large and valuable fleets of English as well as colonial ships and steamers, and which it should be England's aim to keep free from the risk of hostile occupation, that Australasia saw that the step was necessary for the honour of England herself and for the protection of English as well as of colonial interests.

An important difference might have been observed with regard to the proposition, emanating from Victoria, that England should annex the New Hebrides group and all the unappropriated islands of the Western Pacific. No such unanimity was manifested; for there were those who recognized that England's honour required her to keep faith with France with regard to the former; while in the wholesale annexation of the latter it could not be shown that England had any special right over other nations: whilst in event of war it would be impossible to defend so many points, which would thus become sources of weakness instead of strength.

Too much has been made of the possible separation of the Australasian Colonies from the Mother-country. There is no such desire on the part of the Australian Colonies. On the contrary, not only are they thoroughly loyal, but they glory in their connection with the Old Country; and England may keep that loyalty and feeling alive as long as she likes by listening to and promptly granting all reasonable and unanimously-expressed wishes of the colonies, and can endanger and extinguish such feeling only by treating them with indifference and neglect. The colonies are not likely to insist on any demand which will militate against the honour and peace of the whole Empire: in its continuance and glory they rejoice, and, as forming a part of that unity, they feel that their own onward progress is more assured than it could be under a separate existence. Nor is it necessary for true Federation that there be a participation by the colonies in the general government of the Empire. The recent action of the colonies in offering assistance to England in her Egyptian difficulties has shown in an unmistakable manner that, while we have separate domestic interests, we have one common interest—the preservation of the unity and glory of the Empire; and in this feeling lies the foundation of the truest and most lasting Federation.

May, 1885.

ALEX. STUART.

Enclosure.

[Extract from *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9th January, 1885.]

A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION.

FOR some time past Imperial Federation has been in the air. Every one has been talking about it and writing about it for months. It is now about time that the general desire both at Home and in the colonies should assume a practical shape. Otherwise there is some danger that the movement may end in smoke.

It is therefore with considerable satisfaction that we publish this morning a proposal put forward by the Nestor of English Colonial Ministers for giving practical effect to the universal aspiration in favour of maintaining the unity of the Empire. Lord Grey, in the course of a conversation with our representative upon the enormous difficulties in the way of contriving any scheme for the federal government of the Empire, drew from his inexhaustible armoury of precedents an expedient which would enable us to take a long stride towards the realization of our ideal. Why not, Lord Grey asks, reconstitute the Committee of Privy Council for Trade and Plantations formerly attached to the Board of Trade, and attach it as a Colonial Council to the Colonial Office? In this scheme the usual objection to taking action—the impossibility of carrying any but absolutely indispensable Bills through the House of Commons—disappears. The Colonial Board of Advice, Council of the Colonies, or however it might be named, could be revived to-morrow by the Royal prerogative and attached to the Colonial Office—of course with purely advising or consultative functions. This might be regarded as a mere departmental matter of no great importance were it not for the method in which Lord Grey proposes to constitute his Colonial Council. Instead of creating a Board by collecting a heterogeneous number of notables depending for their position solely upon the will of the Crown, the Queen under this scheme would constitute the Council by appointing as